

March 22, 1999

Michael Friedman, M.D.
Commissioner
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Dockets Management Branch
Room 1-23
12420 Parklawn Dr.
Rockville, MD 20857

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Dear Dr. Friedman:

I am writing to urge you to help downed animals.

Downed animal. Just the words produce an image of a suffering, sick animal. Sadly, this nightmarish vision is all too real for thousands of animals at stockyards, slaughterhouses, and production farms across the country. The meat industry calls them "downers" - animals so diseased or badly injured that they cannot even walk. The meat industry deals in downers because they can still sell them for human consumption. The majority of downed animals are processed, despite alarming health problems related to the consumption of diseased and injured animals. Cows, sheep, pigs, horses, mules and goats who are so debilitated that they can no longer stand up or walk are often left languishing for days at stockyards with no food, water or veterinary attention. Then, a worker drags them with chains, or pushes them with a front-end loader or forklift, over to a pile of dead and dying animals.

There is a petition before you which will help downers. Because only animals who reach the slaughterhouse alive can be used for human consumption, owners make more money selling live animals, no matter how ill or injured, than dead ones. As you know, the petition asks the FDA and USDA to classify meat from downers as adulterated; such a classification would afford owners no incentive for prolonging the suffering of downed animals.

It has already taken too long for Congress to pass compassionate legislation which would make a world of difference to these suffering animals. Also, with the increasing incidence of mad cow disease and other food safety risks, the issue of downed animals is no longer simply a matter of animals' suffering but of consumers' health as well. I understand the meat from just one diseased cow can contaminate up to sixteen tons of mass-produced meat.

Although the livestock industry has been aware of downed animal suffering for many years, it has failed to correct this problem through voluntary measures. It is clear that intervention is

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necessary. As Commissioner of the FDA, I urge you to act on this petition, docket number 98P-0151/CP1, and to classify meat from downed animals as adulterated.

Respectfully,

Barbara Delgado

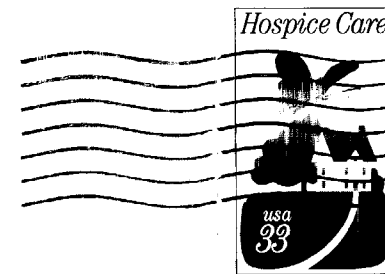
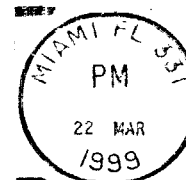
Barbara Delgado

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